

REMARKS

Reconsideration and withdrawal of all grounds of rejection are respectfully requested in view of the amendments and following remarks. Claims 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 11, 13 and 14 were rejected. By entry of this amendment, claims 2, 4, 8, and 11 have been amended, claims 1, 7, 13, and 14 have been cancelled, and new claims 17-31 have been added. Consequently, claims 2, 4, 8, 11, and 17-31 are pending in this application. No new matter has been added.

In the Drawings

The Office has objected to the drawings under 37 CFR 1.83(a). Specifically, the Office has objected to the drawings for not showing retractable wheels. In response, the claims of the application now recite a retractable wheel hub assembly, which is shown in the drawings of the application. As shown in Figs. 1-3 and described in the specification, wheel hub assembly 2 is configured to be raised from a road position shown in Fig. 2 to a marine position shown in Fig. 3. The Applicant respectfully submits that the pending claims of the application overcome the Office's objections to the drawings. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Rejections under 35 USC § 103(a)

Claims 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 11, 13 and 14 were rejected as being unpatentable over Gere et al. (US 5,590,617), in view of Roycroft et al. (US 6,796,856), and further in view of Caserta et al. (US 5,727,494) and JPO 1030883.

By entry of this amendment, independent claim 1 and dependent claims 7, 13, and 14 have been cancelled. Further, dependent claims 2, 4, 8, and 11 have been amended to depend from new independent claim 17. The Applicant respectfully submits that new independent claim 17 is patentable over the cited references because features of the claim are not disclosed, taught, or suggested in the references. For example, the claim recites a rod coupling a bracket attached to the steering arm of a power assisted steering unit to a bell crank that is pivotally coupled to the vehicle. The rod transmits the movement of the steering arm to the bell crank to pivot the bell

crank about a pivot point. The bell crank is coupled to a steerable portion of a marine propulsion unit by a cable that transmits the movement of the bell crank to pivot the steerable portion. As described in paragraph [0020] of the pending application, the rod coupling the bracket to the bell crank may be used to align the steering of the wheel hub assembly and the steering of the marine propulsion unit. None of the cited references disclose, teach, or suggest these features.

For example, Gere does not disclose a rod coupling a steering arm of a steering unit to a bell crank that is pivotally coupled to the vehicle in order to transmit movement of the steering arm to the bell crank, and thus to the marine propulsion unit. The Office cites Gere as disclosing a rack and pinion steering system 150 having a control arm 154 mounted to a wheel link 155 that is arranged to fold upwards when the wheels are retracted. Even though the wheel link 155 of Gere is coupled to the control arm 154, the wheel link cannot be considered a rod as recited in the claim 17. The wheel link 155 does not couple a steering arm of a steering unit to a bell crank in order transmit movement of the steering arm to the bell crank, and thus to a marine propulsion unit. The wheel link 155 is coupled to a steering knuckle 100 and not to a bell crank. Further, the wheel link 155 folds upwards when the wheels are retracted in marine mode. As explained in column 12, lines 24-33 of Gere, during marine mode, the control arm 154 does not move, and instead the rack and pinion system 150 moves relative to frame rods 158, 160 to control the direction of thrust of the marine jet pump. Thus, neither the control arm 154 nor the wheel link 155 move when the wheels are retracted and steering of the marine jet pump is required.

JP 1030883 also does not disclose a rod coupling a steering arm of a steering unit to a bell crank that is pivotally coupled to the vehicle in order to transmit movement of the steering arm to the bell crank, and thus to the marine propulsion unit. The Office cites JP 1030883 as disclosing a rack and pinion steering system which steers front wheels and is connected to a steerable part rearward via bell crank means. Fig. 1 of JP 1030883 appears to show a bell crank mounted directly to a control arm of the rack and pinion steering unit. However, JP 1030883 does not disclose a rod coupling a steering arm of a steering unit to the bell crank, nor does it disclose a marine propulsion unit. Instead, the bell crank is mounted directly to the control arm

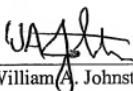
of the rack and pinion steering unit. Such a direct connection cannot be adjusted to align the steering of a wheel hub assembly and the steering of a marine propulsion unit. Further, neither Caserta nor Roycroft disclose a rod coupling a steering arm of a steering unit to a bell crank that is pivotally coupled to the vehicle in order to transmit movement of the steering arm to the bell crank, and thus to the marine propulsion unit.

Therefore, the Applicant respectfully submits that new independent claim 17 is patentable over the cited references. Claims 2, 4, 8, 11, and 17-27 are patentable over the cited references at least based on direct or indirect dependence on claim 17 and are in condition for allowance. Similarly, the Applicant respectfully submits that new independent claims 28 and 31 are patentable over the cited references for at least the reasons discussed above in regards to claim 17. Claims 29 and 30 are patentable over the cited references at least based on direct or indirect dependence on claim 28 and are in condition for allowance.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that all pending claims of this application are in condition for allowance. Accordingly, a Notice of Allowance for all pending claims of this application is respectfully solicited. Furthermore, if the Examiner believes that additional discussions or information might advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

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